

Pope sends telegram to Rwandan Catholics

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VATICAN CITY, April 9 (Reuter) - Pope John Paul sent a telegram of solidarity on Saturday to the Roman Catholic hierarchy and faithful of Rwanda, where the death toll in two days of tribal bloodletting may run into thousands.

"I pray to the Lord to accept into his Kingdom the victims of man's violence," the Pope said. "To the loved ones of those who have died, I convey my deepest condolences and pray for merciful God's help."

The Pontiff made a special appeal to Rwanda's Catholic clerics "to guide the people onto the true path and give them hope...It is up to you to rise up, in this tragic moment for your nation, and become the builders of love and peace!

"I beg you not to succumb to feelings of hatred and vengeance, but bravely to practice dialogue and forgiveness."

Rwanda, in central Africa, lurched towards all-out civil war on Saturday after two days of tribal bloodletting following Wednesday's rocket attack killing of President Juvenal Habyarimana and his counterpart from neighbouring Burundi.

Among the thousands of people reported killed are political leaders, aid workers, nuns, priests, ordinary Rwandans and Belgian U.N. peacekeepers.

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